

Executive Overview

North Carolina citizens were most concerned about

- assurance of fairness and equity among all customer classes,
- reliability of the power supply,
- universal access to electric energy and assignment of responsibility to provide it,
- stranded investment costs and benefits, and
- customer choice of electric providers.

The Legislative Study Commission on the Future of Electric Service in North Carolina hosted eight public hearings across the state over a 3-month period in early 1998. Approximately 1,850 people attended these hearings. The Commission gathered public comments on restructuring the electric utility industry as part of its mission to recommend whether North Carolina should restructure, and if so, how. Although many stakeholder groups were well represented at these hearings, many speakers were private citizens who felt compelled to express their concerns. The average citizen

was not underrepresented at these hearings. For example, parents spoke about the need for customer choice to reduce their electric bills. Young people wanted the public to be more aware of our dependence on fossil fuels and the need for renewable energy sources. Senior citizens wanted their investments in utilities to be protected.

This executive overview discusses the topics most frequently mentioned at the eight public hearings. It also indicates some regional patterns that were evident from examining the topics raised at the hearings. Citizens frequently commented on the Commission's study process itself, so we include a brief discussion of those comments. Finally, many attendees and members of the Commission noted that the public needs to be better educated about this issue. Many people were confused about which portion of the electric utility industry was the subject of discussion at these hearings.